

Focus: Getting Ready

Materials:

Prayer Altar: Cross, Candle, Chasuble on stand (priest's vestment) and Altar Cloth
Advent Wreath
Advent CD
Bible: Children's Everyday Bible
Gift Cut out

Gathering (children find/sit on a carpet square)

Say: Good Morning everyone, my name is _____. Last week we talked about what we can do to prepare for the time when Jesus comes to us again. Being kind and acting in peaceful ways helps build God's kingdom. Today we are going to hear a story about a man who told others to get ready for Jesus.

Opening Prayer

Together we make the Sign of the Cross (do in reverse so children can mirror).

Say: Now let's put our hands together and bow our heads.

Let us pray.

Loving God, Help us to get ready for the coming of Jesus.

Let all the wonderful sights and smells of this season remind us to be ready to welcome Jesus.

Today is the 2nd week of Advent. We light the second purple candle this is the candle of Peace. We are waiting for Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Peacefulness is a feeling of quiet in our hearts. When we aren't planning what to do next. When we are being quiet with God.

Prayer: Loving God, thank You for the peace You give us through Jesus. May Christ's light shine in our lives, showing us the path of peace between God and all people. Help us to prepare our hearts to receive His peace. We ask in the name of your son Jesus. Amen.

Song/Movement

Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, track: 1, from Advent CD

Play music, encourage children to stretch or move to the music (clapping, stamp feet march in place to the beat), turn to each other and shake hands, saying hello, etc. Have children sit on their carpet squares when finished.

Chorus:

I got your hope peace joy and love

The best gifts come from above

I got your hope peace joy and love

in my heart

(Repeat)

Hope is a light in the darkness,
shining brightly on Bethlehem town

The Messiah is born; he's our king
and our lord; the promise of love

we have found

Glory to god in the highest; peace

on earth and good will to all men

Take the star in the east to the

prince of peace who will someday

be coming again.

Repeat chorus 2x

An angel appeared from the heavens, bringing news to the shepherds that night. Good tidings of joy, in the birth of a boy, born to give us forgiveness and life.

Jesus Emmanuel Savior; little baby the gift from above
He loved us so much he gave his only son, the gift of hope peace joy and love.

Repeat Chorus 4x

Memory Verse

Say: *Now let's take a moment together to learn a verse from the bible.*

We tell God we are sorry for our bad choices.

Have the children repeat the verse after you a couple of times.

Say: *Jesus teaches us to love one another. When we decide to do something that doesn't show love we won't be ready for Jesus when he comes. When we say we are sorry to God and do our best to show love to others we will be ready for Jesus. Some people don't want to spend their time or money doing what God wants. They will not be ready because they are selfish and did not like to share.*

Gospel Story

Say: *Today we are reading from the Gospel of Matthew.*

Have children make sign of the cross on their forehead, mouth and heart saying. *"Lord, open my mind, my lips and my heart so that I may learn it, speak it and love it."*

Read: Children's Everyday Bible, pp. 222, *John the Baptist*

After the reading say: *The Gospel of the Lord*

Children respond: *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion Starters:

- *How would you describe John the Baptist?*
- *What does John the Baptist do?*
- *How does John the Baptist announce the coming of Jesus?*
- *How does John help the people get ready for Jesus?*

Reflection on Reading:

In today's Gospel story we find a bold and courageous character named John the Baptist. John helps people get ready for the coming of Jesus. Out of the wilderness, John the Baptist appears wearing clothing of camel's hair. His food is locusts and wild honey. John calls people to prepare for the coming of the Messiah promised by God.

In today's passage, John the Baptist calls for people to change their ways. He baptizes them so they can welcome Jesus into their hearts. John's mission and message brings attention to Jesus, the coming Messiah, for whom the people have been waiting a long time. He tells them what they should do to welcome Jesus into their hearts. They are the same things that we must do to be ready when Jesus comes again.

Gospel ActivityActivity 1:

This is an exciting time of year. It is often a time when company comes. Maybe it is grandparents who will come for Christmas, or perhaps a favorite aunt or uncle. Don't you love to have company come? It is nice to visit, but it also means that there is a lot of work to do. We wouldn't want company to come and find our house in a mess. We have to mop, vacuum, dust, clean the bathrooms, make sure the beds are all made, and ...the list can seem like there is no end.

In our Bible lesson today, we read about a man named John who went into the country around the Jordan River preaching and telling people to prepare for the coming of the Lord. When John told people to prepare for the coming of the Lord, he didn't mean that they should go home and sweep the floor, pick up their toys, and make their beds. He meant that they should prepare their hearts. How? By saying they are sorry for making the wrong choice and turning toward God. When they did this, John would baptize them in the Jordan River. That is how he got the name, "John the Baptist."

The Bible tells us that Jesus is coming again and, just as in the day of John the Baptist, it is important for us to make sure our hearts are clean and ready for the coming of the Lord. We do that by telling God about our mistakes, saying we are sorry and asking God to forgive us. If we will do that, the Bible tells us that he will forgive us and make our hearts clean.

Cleaning house isn't something you can do one time and forget it. It is something that we must do every day. If we kept our house clean all the time, it wouldn't be such a big job to get ready for company. That same thing is true when it comes to keeping our hearts ready for Jesus' return. We must spend time each day in prayer, reading his Word, and asking God's forgiveness for those things that keep us from being ready to welcome Jesus' return.

Jesus is coming! How exciting! But first, there is some heart cleaning that must be done!

Father, forgive us of the things that we do each day that are not pleasing to you. Make our hearts clean so that we will be ready for the return of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. In his name we pray. Amen.

Activity 2:

One way we can prepare the way for Jesus is to tell others about him.

Have the children sit in a circle. Tell them the package represents God's gift of Faith. We share our faith when we live as Jesus taught us.

Have them pass the gift as the music plays, use the song "Change My Heart O God" Track 23 on America's 25 Favorite Bible Songs or similar. When the music stops the one with the gift steps into the center of the circle and tells one thing they know about God the Father or Jesus, the Son. The rest of the group continues to play as time allows, with each child stepping into the circle. When time is up and there are still children outside the circle have them come into the circle and hold hands while you pray.

Dear God, thank you for all that we have and sending your Son, Jesus to teach us to be good. We know you want everyone to be inside your great big circle of love. Help us to love one another as you love each of us. Amen.

Complete the weekly bulletin as a group-let the children color them if there is extra time

Closing Prayer

(Children respond: "I Believe!")

Ask: *Do you believe in God, who loves us always?*

Do you believe in Jesus, who sent the Holy Spirit to guide us to make right choices?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who fills us with the power of God's love?

Sending Forth

Say: Prepare the Way of Jesus. Tell others about Jesus. You can say he teaches, he loves, he heals, he is the Son of God, he is the Good Shepherd. Spread the Good News!

Lining Up/Closing Song

Play "Father, We Thank Thee" track 3 from Advent CD while children put away any materials and lineup. Hand out weekly bulletins. Remind them it is important that they return to their family quietly so that we may all listen and pray together in church.